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Editorials

Industry Curbs Smoking Promotion On Campuses

In these days of intensified competition and promotion of consumer products, a voluntary action by most of the principal tobacco firms comes as a considerable surprise.

It is the decision to discontinue cigarette sales promotion in student publications and in athletic programs on American university and college campuses.

The course of action was announced as an accomplished fact, without prior indication that it was in the making, and without any public campaign involving the particular question.

President George V. Allen of the Tobacco Institute summed up the whole thing in one sentence:

"The tobacco industry's position has always been that smoking is an adult custom."

He commented further that the decision of the cigarette manufacturers was for the purpose of emphasizing that position, and to prevent any public misconception that they were trying to concentrate their sales appeal toward adolescents.

The policy announcement through the institute, trade association composed of nearly all the tobacco firms, made no reference to health arguments as to cigarette smoking, nor to current discussions as to expanding or restricting individual privileges or activities in the nation's colleges and universities.

It carried no implication of advice to young people.

The firms, through the Tobacco Institute, have financed very extensive research into health aspects of smoking and particularly on the various types and effectiveness of health safeguards in the various processes of preparing and manufacturing cigarettes and other tobacco products.

These reports have been made public, along with the stream of widely varying and generally contradictory opinions from other research organizations and from individuals.

The new action, taken without pressure from college administrators or other sources, appears to be simply an intentional and considered public relations gesture toward the industry's consumer public, probably the broadest consumer market for any mass product. It is truly an implementation of the industry's declared position "that smoking is an adult custom."

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